

DISPLAYS

FAQ

Q What does the RS-232 port on a projector do?

A RS-232 serial ports, often called control ports in a projector's manual, let the projector be remotely controlled. They are particularly useful if you're using the projector in a large room, such as an auditorium, conference room or school assembly hall. Here, the projector can be connected to a control box, which can turn on the projector, lower a screen, shut the curtains and lower the lights.

RS-232 ports are quite common. In fact, both projectors we've reviewed this month have one. Even the budget ViewSonic PJ503D is equipped with one, though it is doubtful it would be used in such a setting as described above. It's very unlikely that home users will ever need to use this port.

Lynley Oram

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VIEWSONIC PJ503D

★★★★★

£317 inc VAT



If all you need is a simple projector for carrying from room-to-room for the odd PowerPoint presentation, ViewSonic's DLP PJ503D will probably suit your needs. Its native resolution of 800x600 isn't very high, but it's not very expensive. In fact, it's less than half the price of the 1,024x768 office projectors that we looked at in our recent projectors Labs test (*Shopper* May 2007).

A lower resolution for slide work isn't much of a drawback and the PJ503D is capable of doing justice to a presentation. It can also take higher-resolution inputs up to 1,280x1,024 and down-scale them to fit its native resolution. While this isn't anywhere near as good as having a higher resolution, the PJ503D copes well with the scaling. Again, the quality is fine for presentations.

The projector generally performed well when connected to a PC using its analogue VGA input (there's no digital input). Our greyscale test was displayed competently, with smooth transitions from black to white. Colours in our test photos were bold and vivid, if a little inaccurate. Skin tones looked slightly shallow, with a brownish tinge to reds.

The PJ503D has a short throw, projecting a 59in image at just 2½m. This means that you'll be able to get a decent-sized display in most meeting rooms. At 1,500 ANSI lumens, the projector isn't very bright, so you'll find it hard to use in a bright room. You'll be fine with standard office lighting, but you may need to lower the blinds to block out sunlight.

There is a Brightest mode preset, but this simply adjusts brightness and contrast settings to make the projected



image look brighter. However, we found that colours became badly oversaturated and almost painful to look at, so we'd avoid using it.

The PJ503D supports HD video formats up to 1,080i, but only if you connect with a component-to-VGA lead. Even so, the input has to be downsampled to match the projector's native resolution, so you lose much of the benefit of having HD footage in the first place. There are S-video and composite video inputs if you need to connect a DVD player.

The PJ503D isn't a good projector for viewing moving images. Interlaced footage looked awful, with a lot of speckling in areas of solid colour and a jagged appearance on straight edges.

This isn't really a projector that's designed for moving images, and it's certainly not one that you'd want to use for relaxing with a movie after a hard day's work. Its relatively low resolution means it's not ideal for general PC use. Still, for an office where you need to give regular presentations, the PJ503D is an excellent choice and great value.

Lynley Oram

SUMMARY

- ✓ Inexpensive
- ✓ Good contrast ratio
- ✗ Lacks brightness

OFFICE PROJECTOR DLP, 800x600 native resolution, 2,000:1 contrast ratio, 1,500 ANSI lumens
PART CODE VS11705
SUPPLIER www.misco.co.uk
DETAILS www.viewsoniceurope.com/uk

Also consider...

SAMSUNG 215TW

★★★★★

£359 inc VAT



Samsung's 215TW is a top-quality monitor that's perfectly suited to home and work use. Viewing angles are excellent and the picture quality cannot be faulted. It has a comprehensive range of connections, including S-video, composite, component, DVI and D-sub. There's a picture-in-picture option, too, so you can watch DVDs while you work.

21in LCD 1,680x1,050 resolution, 8ms response time, 1,000:1 contrast ratio, D-sub, DVI, S-video, composite and component inputs
PART CODE SAMQDPWASQ
SUPPLIER www.pixmania.com
DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk
✓ Excellent picture quality ✗ Pricy
FULL REVIEW Sep 2006

IYYAMA X486S-B1

★★★★★

£189 inc VAT



Iiyama's X486S-B1 is a tastefully designed display. It has a reflective coating, which makes colours look richer and blacks look darker. An ambient light sensor automatically adjusts the monitor's brightness according to the room's light level, while an infrared sensor detects when you're in front of the monitor and turns it off to save power when you're not.

19in LCD 1,280x1,024 resolution, 700:1 contrast ratio, 2ms response time, D-sub, DVI, USB2 port PART CODE X486SB1
SUPPLIER www.morecomputers.co.uk
DETAILS www.iiyama.co.uk
✓ Good picture quality ✗ Auto-brightness feature doesn't work very well
FULL REVIEW Feb 2007

AG NEOVO K-A19

★★★★★

£128 inc VAT



If you're building a system on a budget, AG Neovo's 19in widescreen K-A19 monitor is ideal. It isn't the best-looking monitor we've seen, but it has excellent image quality. The display is sharply focused with rich and vibrant colours.

The lack of a digital input is disappointing, but otherwise this is an excellent display at a great price.

19in WIDESCREEN LCD 1,440x900 resolution, 850:1 contrast ratio, 3ms response time (grey-to-grey), D-sub PART CODE K-A19
SUPPLIER www.lambda-tek.com
DETAILS www.ag-neovo.co.uk ✓ Good image quality; inexpensive ✗ Unattractive design
FULL REVIEW May 2007



PANASONIC PT-AX100E

★★★★★

£944 inc VAT

If you want to enjoy HP footage to its fullest potential, you need a giant screen. The best way to do this is with a home cinema projector, such as Panasonic's PT-AX100E. It arrived too late to be reviewed for our projector group test (*Labs, Shopper May 2007*), which is a shame, as it would have given the home cinema Best Buy winner, Hitachi's Illumina PJ-TX300 (see 'Also consider...' below), some serious competition.

Like the PJ-TX300, the PT-AX100E is a 3-LCD model with a 1,280x720 native resolution and a 16:9 native aspect ratio. Its dynamic iris helps to give more contrast than a traditional LCD system. This works by letting less light through in dark scenes to increase the number of dark shades, and letting more light through in light scenes to increase the number of light shades. Despite the fact that the PT-AX100E has a lower 6,000:1 contrast ratio than the PJ-TX300's 10,000:1, we couldn't tell the difference between the two.

We were impressed with the PT-AX100E's 2,000 ANSI lumens, which make it considerably brighter than any other home cinema model we've seen. The PJ-TX300 manages only 1,200 ANSI lumens. This means the PT-AX100E will produce a visible display in much lighter rooms than other home cinema projectors can manage.

The PT-AX100E will fit into rooms of any size. It can display an image size range of 49in at 1.2m up to a massive 200in at 12.4m, although you'd need a big room to do this. The PT-AX100E doesn't



have to face the display area directly, as its lens can be physically adjusted up to 25 per cent horizontally and 63 per cent vertically using the lens-shift wheels.

There's a VGA connector for connecting a PC, and using it produced an excellent image. However, if your PC has a DVI connector, we'd recommend buying a DVI-to-HDMI cable for the best possible image quality. There are component, composite and S-video connectors for any other home-entertainment equipment you might have.

We can't fault the image quality produced by the PT-AX100E. Although it is a home cinema model, it sailed through all our display tests without any problems at all. It performed well when showing HD video clips, picking out sharp detail in even the darkest areas. It was equally

impressive when displaying interlaced material.

Panasonic's PT-AX100E is easily the equal of Hitachi's PJ-TX300 in terms of image quality, but it costs £150 more. This may be worth paying, however, if you will take advantage of the 2,000 ANSI lumens brightness and use it in lighter rooms.

Lyndon Oram

SUMMARY

- ✓ Superb image quality
- ✓ Bright
- ✗ A little expensive

HOME CINEMA PROJECTOR 3-LCD, 1,280x720 native resolution, 6,000:1 contrast ratio, 2,000 ANSI lumens
PART CODE PT-AX100E
SUPPLIER www.purelygadgets.co.uk
DETAILS www.panasonic.co.uk

CHOOSING AN... LCD Monitor

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

IMAGE SIZE: 17in

NATIVE RESOLUTION: 1,280x1,024

INPUTS: VGA

Recommended minimum in grey

1 A basic 17in LCD monitor with the specifications listed above will cost around £95. It will be fine for basic Windows work, but it will have poor viewing angles and colour reproduction won't be very good, so it's not ideal for colour-sensitive work.

2 A VGA input means you'll be able to use the monitor with every PC, but it won't give you as good a picture as with DVI. This digital connection requires a compatible graphics card, but means there are no digital-to-analogue or analogue-to-digital conversions, which reduce the quality of the picture. A DVI connection automatically gets the best picture; you won't have to adjust clock or phase settings as you do with an analogue connection.

3 A 19in monitor will cost around £130 and has the same native resolution as 17in models, but the extra space is easier on the eye. If you want higher resolutions, a 20.1in (from around £190) or larger display will have a native resolution of 1,600x1,200.

A widescreen monitor makes sense if you watch a lot of movies or play games. The budget models come with a resolution of 1,440x900 (from around £110), while the larger more expensive models have a resolution of 1,680x1,050 (from around £220).

4 If you want a better-quality picture, look for a monitor with high contrast ratios. The higher the ratio, the whiter the whites and the blacker the blacks look. In images with high contrast levels, you'll be able to see finer details.

The viewing angles are important as wider angles mean you don't have to sit face on to get the best picture. Wider angles also mean that more people can watch your screen, which is useful if you want to show films.

Fast response times cut down on ghosting. Don't be blinded by the numbers, though, as a response time of 25ms or quicker is fine for all applications.

5 Extras such as speakers and a USB hub can be useful, but don't buy solely for them; monitor speakers tend to be poor, while USB hubs cost only a few pounds.

DELL 1800MP

★★★★★

£515 inc VAT

PRICE CUT!



Dell's 1800MP is a good all-round projector, and at this price it's a bargain. It has excellent image quality. Two D-sub VGA connectors allow it to be connected to two PCs at once, so you can swap between two presenters.

If you want a projector for business this is the best choice, and it's also suitable for watching movies.



OFFICE PROJECTOR DLP 1,024x768 native resolution, 2,000:1 contrast ratio, 2,100 ANSI lumens
PART CODE 1800MP
SUPPLIER www.digitaldirect.co.uk
DETAILS www.dell.co.uk ✓ Good contrast; superb image quality; minimal rainbow effect FULL REVIEW May 2007

LG 32LC2D

★★★★★

£477 inc VAT

PRICE CUT!



LG's 32LC2D produces beautiful, realistic pictures. Images from our HD movie clips were perfect and the TV displayed every detail flawlessly. Connecting to a PC is easy through D-sub or HDMI and the picture was brilliant. It's excellent value, with a wide range of connections.



32in LCD HD TV VGA, HDMI, component, three SCART, optical S/PDIF, digital tuner PART CODE 32LC2D
SUPPLIER www.office-online.co.uk
DETAILS <http://uk.lge.com> ✓ Superb all-round picture quality; good computer display FULL REVIEW Nov 2006

HITACHI Illumina PJ-TX300

★★★★★

£791 inc VAT



The glossy sheen on Hitachi's Illumina PJ-TX300 looks fabulous, but there's more to this projector than its good looks. The PJ-TX300 will show a high-quality 203cm image at two metres.

If you want a projector to show films this is an ideal choice, and it's a bargain, too.



HOME CINEMA PROJECTOR 3-LCD, 1,280x720 native resolution, 10,000:1 contrast ratio, 1,200 ANSI lumens
PART CODE HITPRX63
SUPPLIER www.pixmania.co.uk
DETAILS www.hitachidigitalmedia.com
✓ Inexpensive; Superb image quality; excellent contrast FULL REVIEW May 2007